



# **The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Health Care**

**By Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz**

On February 13, 2009, Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz (TX-27) joined the majority of the House of Representatives in passing H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This historic piece of legislation will save and create approximately 3.5 million jobs, stimulate the nation's economy, and transform the economy to promote long-term growth and stability. In Texas, approximately 269,000 jobs will be saved or created as a result of this legislation. In addition, the recently passed Recovery Package includes provisions that will sustain health care benefits to our citizens during these hard times.

## **Maintaining Access to Quality Health Care**

### ***Medicaid***

This bill expands eligibility for Medicaid and provides for increased federal matching to the state Medicaid program. Texas will receive an increase of \$5.45 billion in their matching federal funds over a 27-month period.

### ***Subsidies for COBRA continuation for health coverage***

Currently, the COBRA program offers health coverage for unemployed workers by paying the full cost of insurance premiums of their employer's health insurance.

To help people maintain coverage, H.R. 1 provides a 65% subsidy for COBRA continuation premiums for up to 9 months for workers who have been involuntarily terminated, and for their families. As our unemployment rate increases, it is important to temporarily alleviate the concern of not being able to provide adequate health care to you and your family. To qualify for premium assistance, a worker must be involuntarily terminated between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009. If an employee was not able to afford the high COBRA premiums when laid off of work between September 1, 2008 and the date of enactment, applicants will be given a 60-day application period to enroll. This program is targeted at those most in need and applicants will have to show that their single year income will not exceed \$150,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for families.

### ***Advancements for Health Information Technology***

As technology advances, it is important for our country to keep all aspects of our health care practices as up-to-date as possible. H.R. 1 includes roughly \$19 billion for health information technology infrastructure and Medicare and Medicaid incentives to encourage doctors, hospitals, and other providers to use health IT to electronically exchange patients' health information.

### ***Community Health Centers Care Service***

H.R. 1 provides \$500 million for community health centers to provide care to uninsured and underserved rural and urban populations. There will also be \$1.5 billion in competitive grants or supplements to existing community health centers to aid with modernization projects.

## **Ensuring Accountability and Transparency of Taxpayer Investment**

Funds appropriated in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act will be distributed via existing formulas and programs with proven track records when possible. Through various measures, the

legislation promotes swift obligation of funds to immediately stimulate the economy, while still ensuring transparency and accountability. Measures are in place so that taxpayers will be able to see exactly how their investment in our nation's economy is being spent at <http://www.recovery.gov/>. Any obligation of funds by a federal, state or local entity and all competitive grants must be posted for the public on this website. There are no earmarks in this bill.

To find out more information concerning infrastructure and science investment in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, please visit <http://ortiz.house.gov/> and <http://www.recovery.gov/>.

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